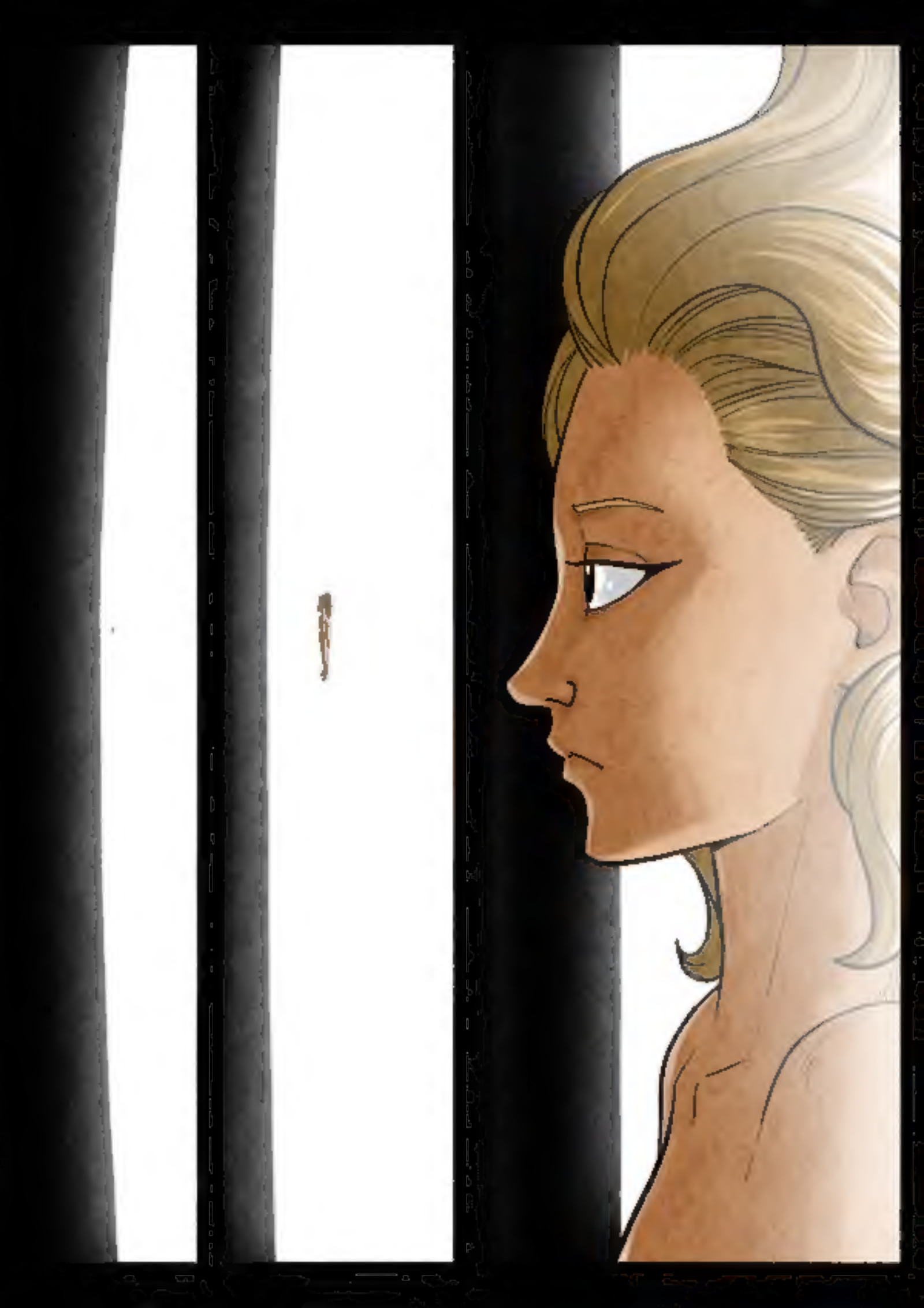
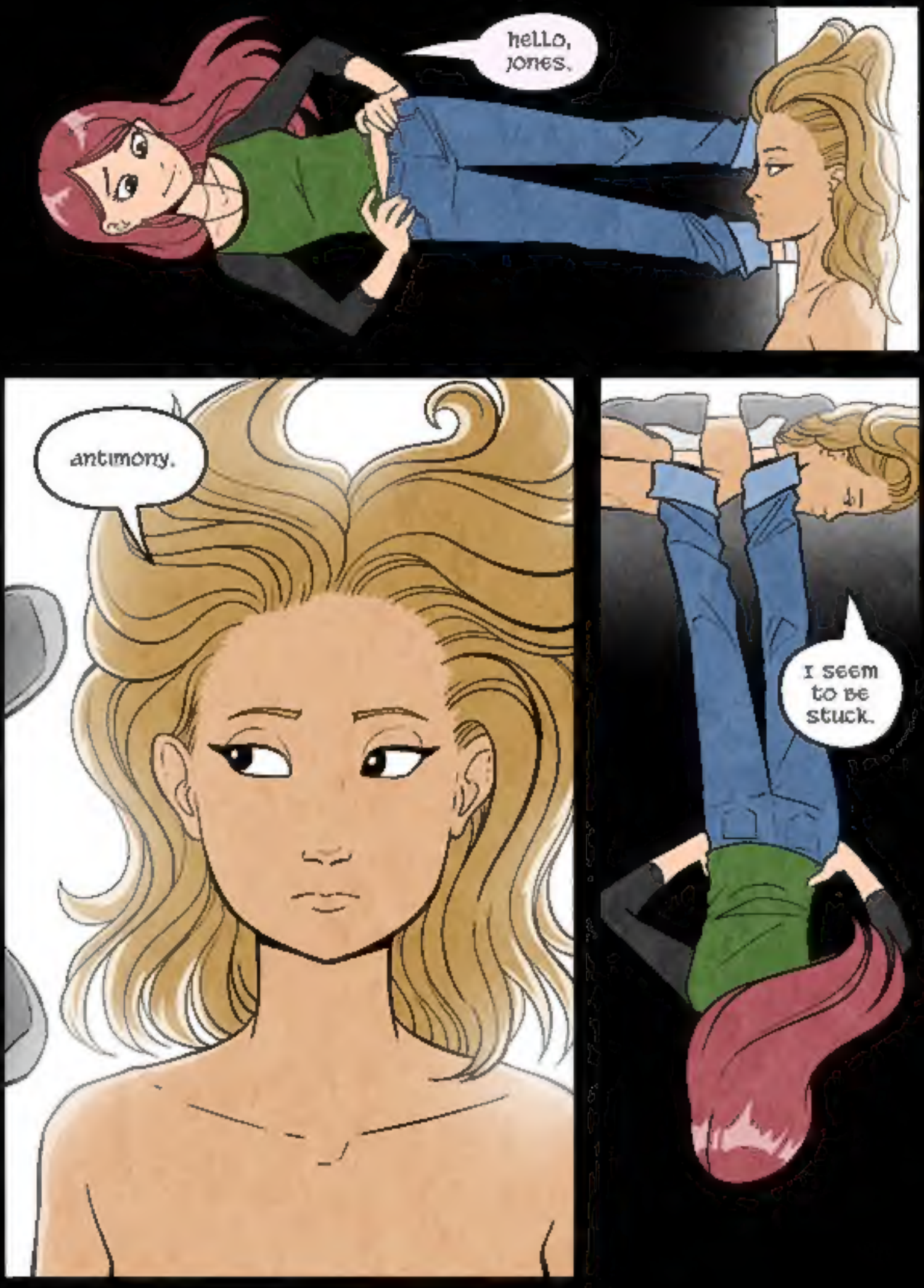
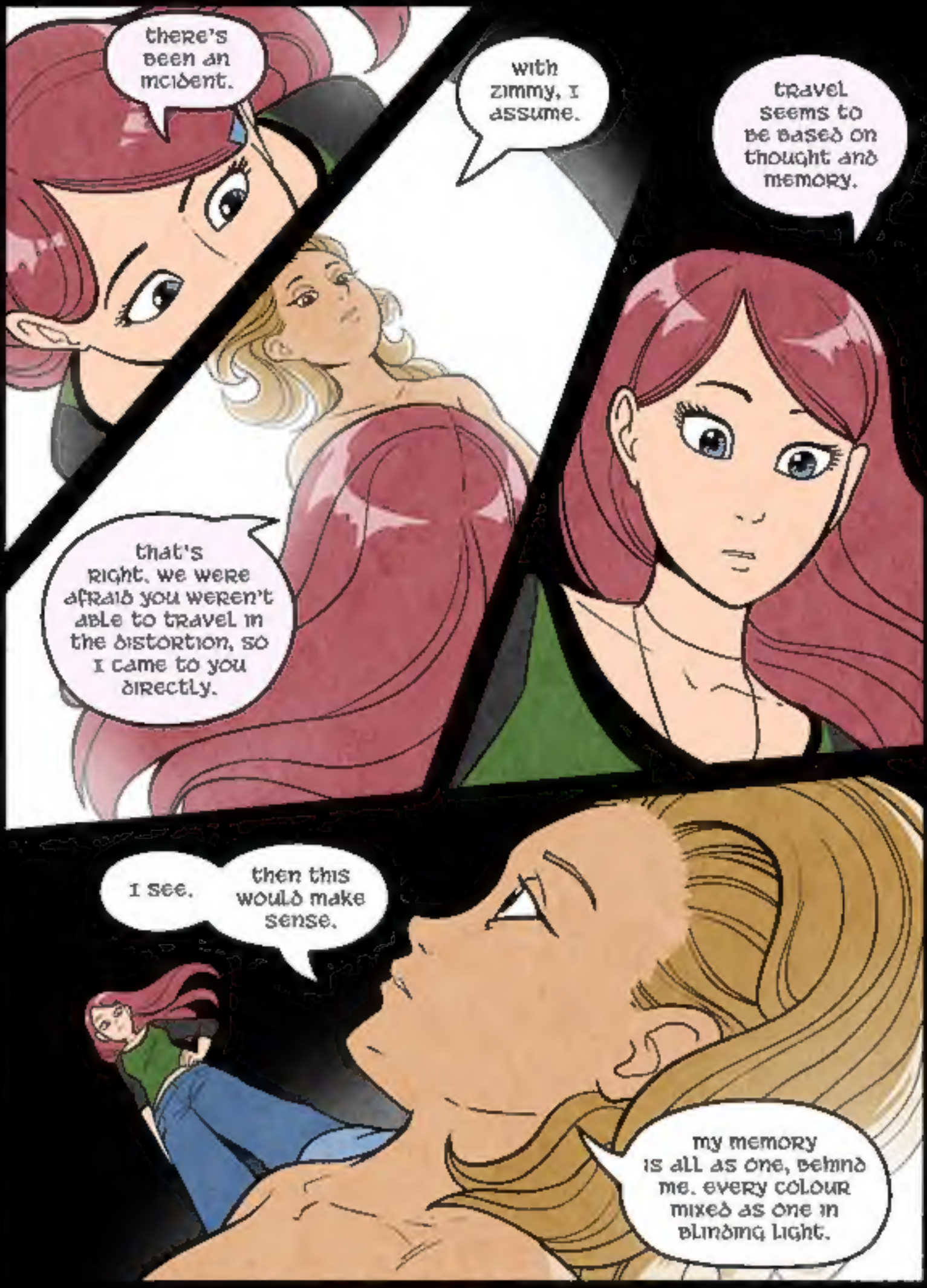
Gunnerkrigg Court

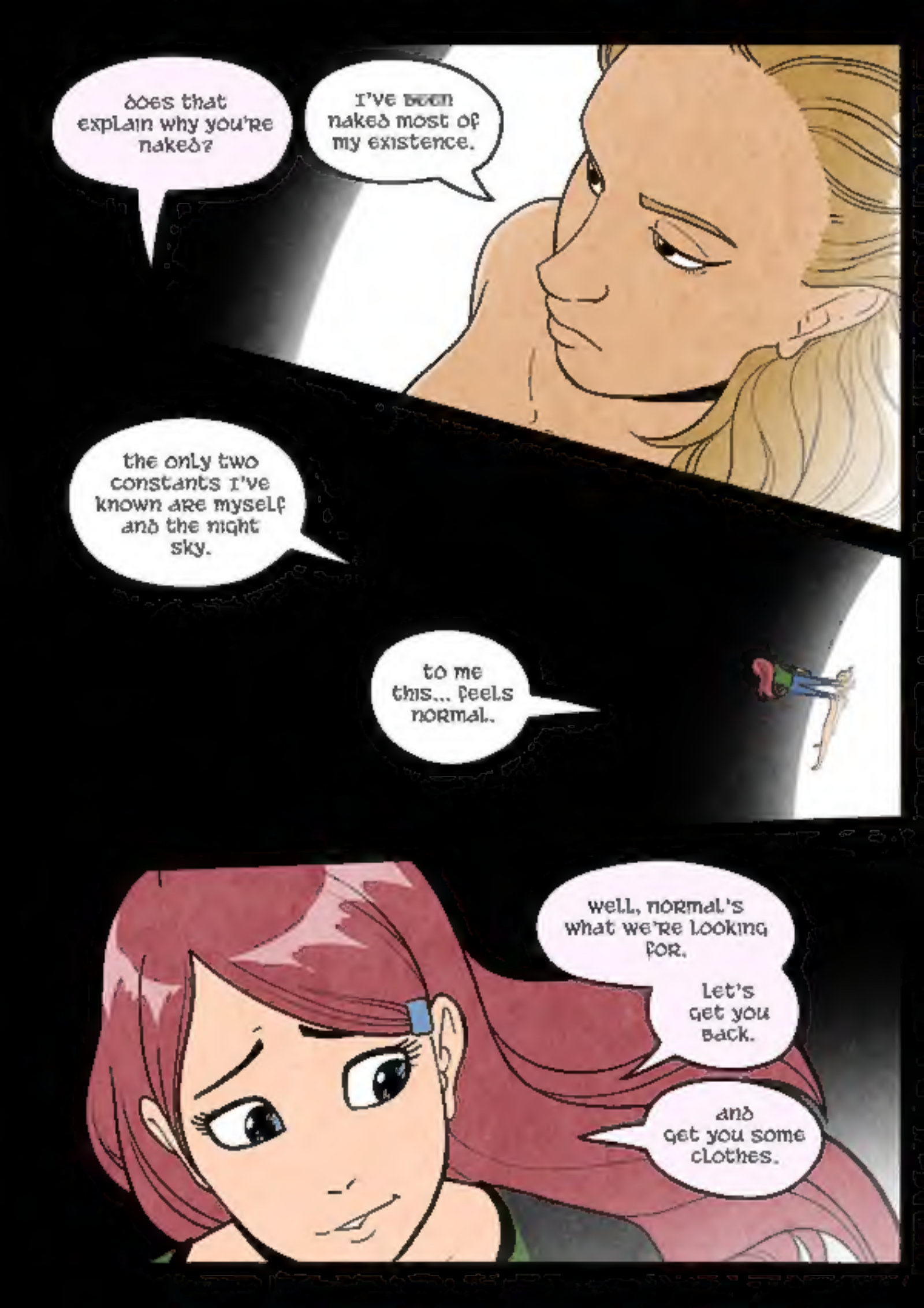
Chapter 99:

Runaround

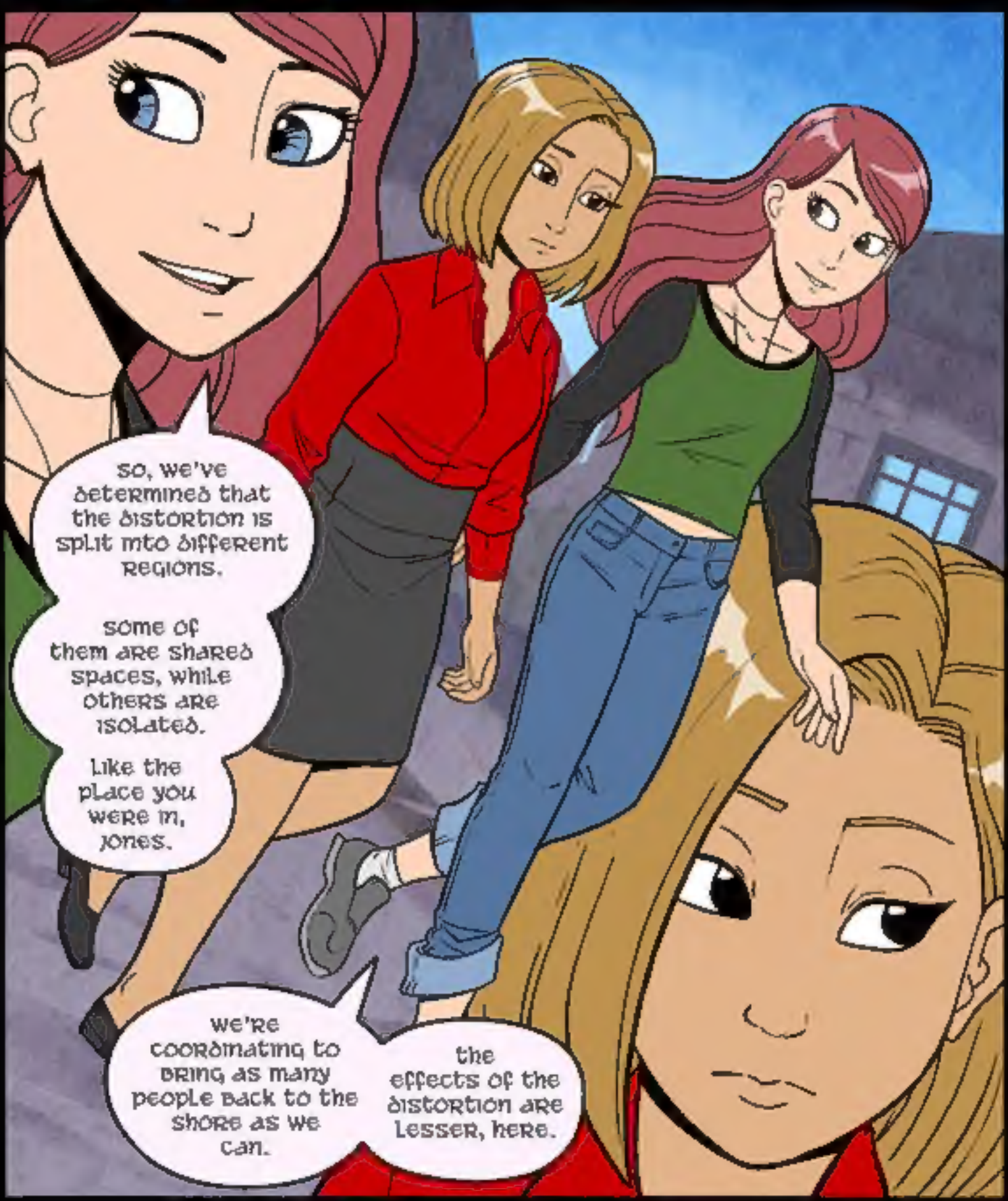


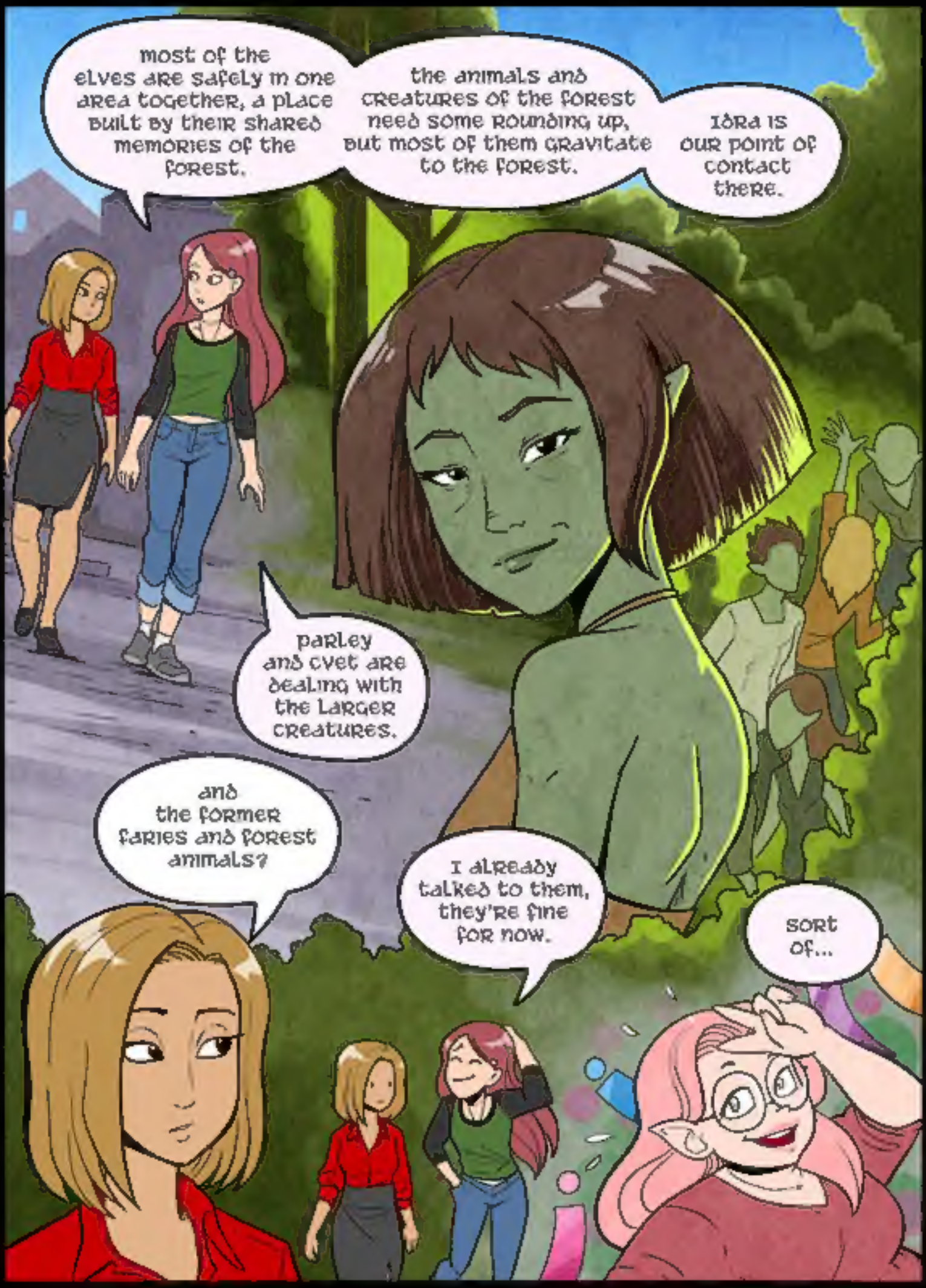

hello, jones.
antimony.
I seem to be stuck.

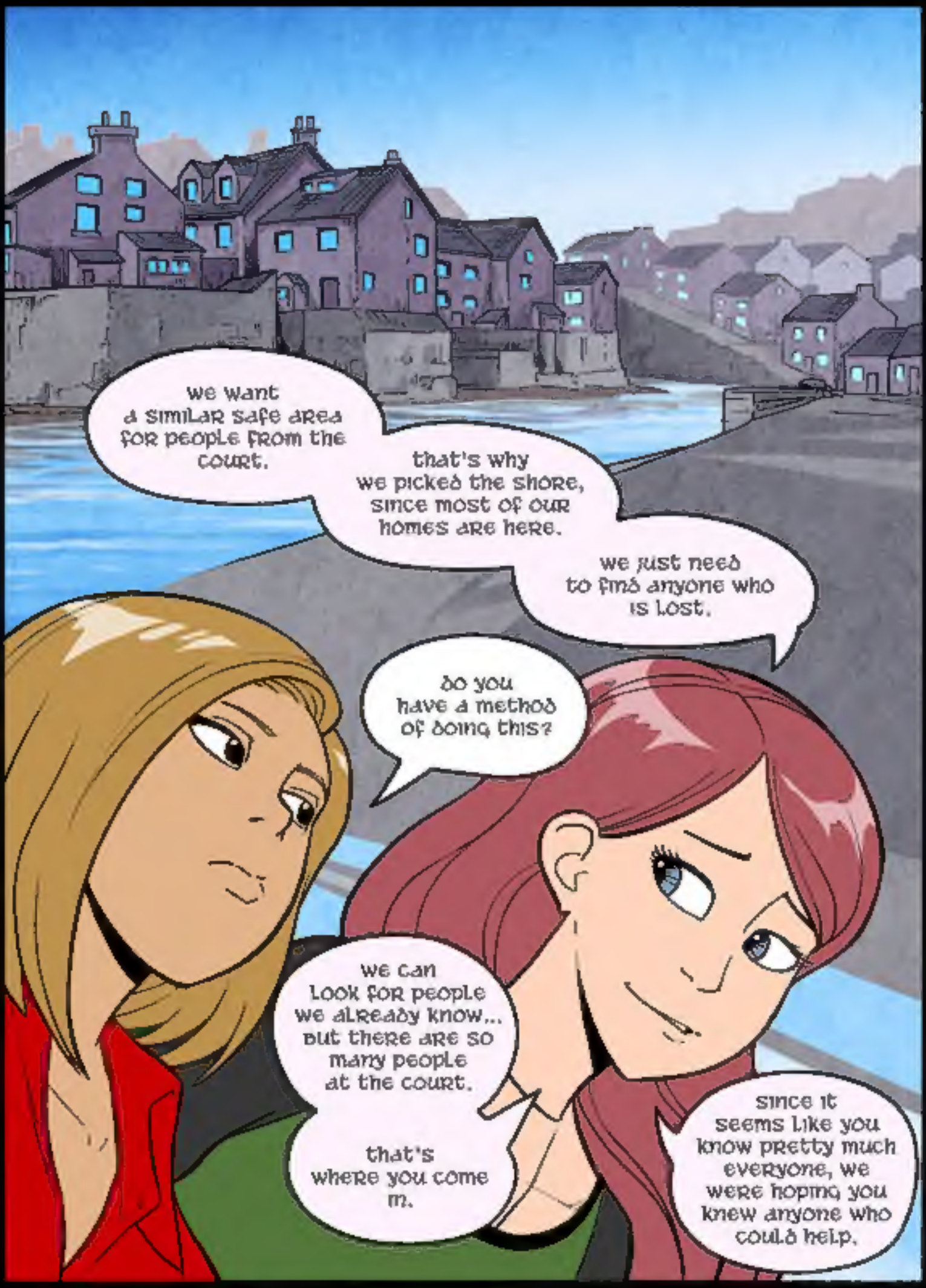

there's been an incident.
with zimmy, I assume.
travel seems to be based on thought and memory.
that's right. we were afraid you weren't able to travel in the distortion, so I came to you directly.
I see.
then this would make sense.
my memory is all as one, behind me. every colour mixed as one in blinding light.

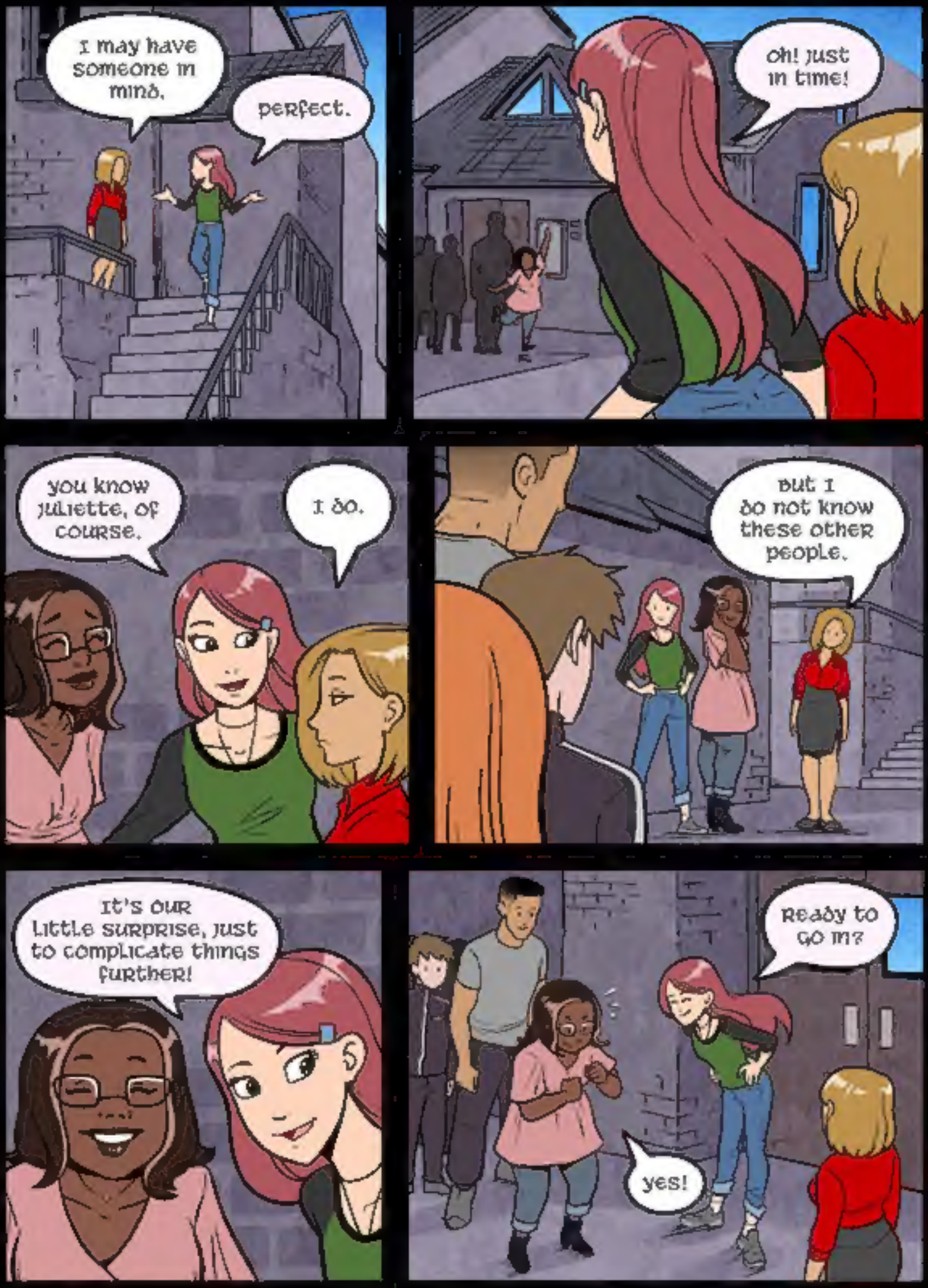

does that explain why you're naked?
I've been naked most of my existence.
the only two constants I've known are myself and the night sky.
to me this... feels normal..
well, normal's what we're looking for.
let's get you back.
and get you some clothes.

A CHANGE OF CLOTHES AND SOME EXPOSITION LATER


So, we've determined that the distortion is split into different regions.
Some of them are shared spaces, while others are isolated.
Like the place you were in, Jones.
We're coordinating to bring as many people back to the shore as we can.
the effects of the distortion are lesser, here.


most of the elves are safely in one area together, a place built by their shared memories of the forest.
the animals and creatures of the forest need some rounding up, but most of them gravitate to the forest.
Iora is our point of contact there.
parley and cvet are dealing with the larger creatures.
and the former faries and forest animals?
I already talked to them, they're fine for now.
sort of...


we want a similar safe area for people from the court.
that's why we picked the shore, since most of our homes are here.
we just need to find anyone who is lost.
do you have a method of doing this?
we can look for people we already know... but there are so many people at the court.
that's where you come in.
since it seems like you know pretty much everyone, we were hoping you knew anyone who could help.


I may have someone in mind.
perfect.
oh! just in time!
you know juliette, of course.
I do.
but I do not know these other people.
It's our little surprise, just to complicate things further!
ready to go in?
yes!

well, carver, being introduced to a new species wasn't on my list today
I guess none of this was.
things seem to be in hand, james?
annie's been running around like crazy, bringing everyone together.
you'd be proud of her, jones
oh, say, is renard not with you?
oh, he's busy!

antimony, you've certainly risen to the task.
you've brought people together who can help, and put their skills to use.
well, it's the least I could do.
I can't help but feel responsible for most of this
I just want to do what I can.
you are aware that I cannot feel pride. either way ~
thank you, jones
here we are
KNOCK KNOCK
um... yes?

oh . miss jones?
zara
I'd like you to meet antimony carver.
uhh... hello!
so! jones tells me you do have a way of tracking people?
umm
something like that!
zee?
who is it?

Rosa, this is Antimony Carver
Hello! Sorry to barge in!
This is Rosa, my roommate.
um, hi.
um...
Life's a Witch
So you know Jack Hyland and Jenny... um
Jenny Holloway? Yeah, we do
Ah I don't think she likes me very much....
And why would that be?

well, jack and I had some run-ins with a person called zimmy.
jenny helped, too. a while back now
not long ago I asked if they could help me find her and jenny cast some sort of spell.
I was able to talk to zimmy, but they all must have got the wrong impression...
they thought I was drawing her near the star ocean for one reason or another
but truth is, jenny picked the spot to cast her spell!
we were in a cafe by the shore, we just stepped outside to get some space.
Spell Site
Cafe
Shoreline
huh.

So... this Zimmy? Did you want us to find her?
Oh, no! not at all!
But there is something I need your help finding. Is that okay?
And I'm so curious about the magic you do.
Do you have a coven?
That's so great!
Jenny said she wasn't an apprentice when I last saw her
She must have graduated in some way?
Is she well?

well, you know, jack and I are working on a device that will help us travel the fracture storm more precisely!
ah! wonderful! that would be very handy.
is the fracture storm what you call the distortion?
very evocative!
so, annie what did you want us to find?
omega.

BWIP
nice try, annie!
getting a little too close!
GRAB

um
wha - what's happening?!
SLUMP
ugh!
CRASH

I'm blind!
I'm blind!
antimony
I knew you'd figure it out
BWAP
Renard! It worked!
good!
Kat will be along shortly
she's checking everything
Ladies

omega
there, there
you aren't blind...
I - I can't see anything
yes you can.
just use your eyes.
ZWIP
It's done
kat!
omega's personality is partitioned from her physical computer.

oh, um, hi
I'm kat
ROSA.
ZARA, hi.
yeah, hi.
SORRY about this
no problem
my mind.
It's quiet...
you should be fine, omega.
I took control of your physical computer directly
how . how did you find it?
I - I should have seen .
we found you by not looking.

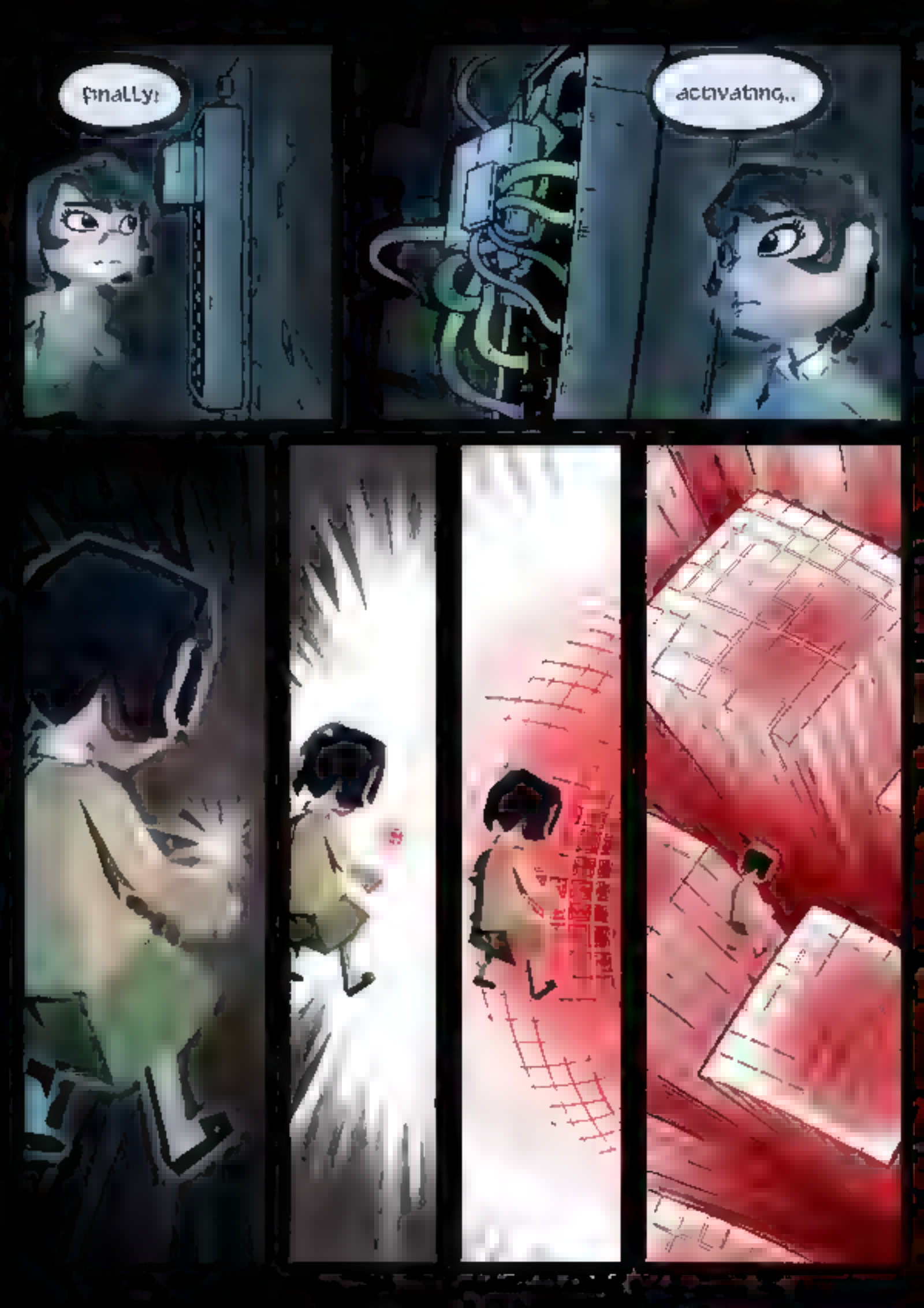
annie was travelling around the distortion while renard stayed with me.
that way, I could keep in contact with kat through the ether at any distance
all the while, she was carrying a network scraper I gave her.
everywhere she went, the scraper recorded information passively
she was making a map of every computer in the court for me
not just that, but also maps of power routing, facilities, services.
I figured, a computer like yours, omega, something that runs indefinitely without outside interaction, must use a lot of resources.

But, and this was Annie's idea, I ignored everything connected to Omega.
any mention, subsystem, network key, anything associated with you, I intentionally excluded from my map
I had an area of negative space that I deduced was your physical location.
Of course, I couldn't do anything with that information, or you'd know
Lucky for me, Omega, you conjured up a body that I designed!
I literally know how your brain works

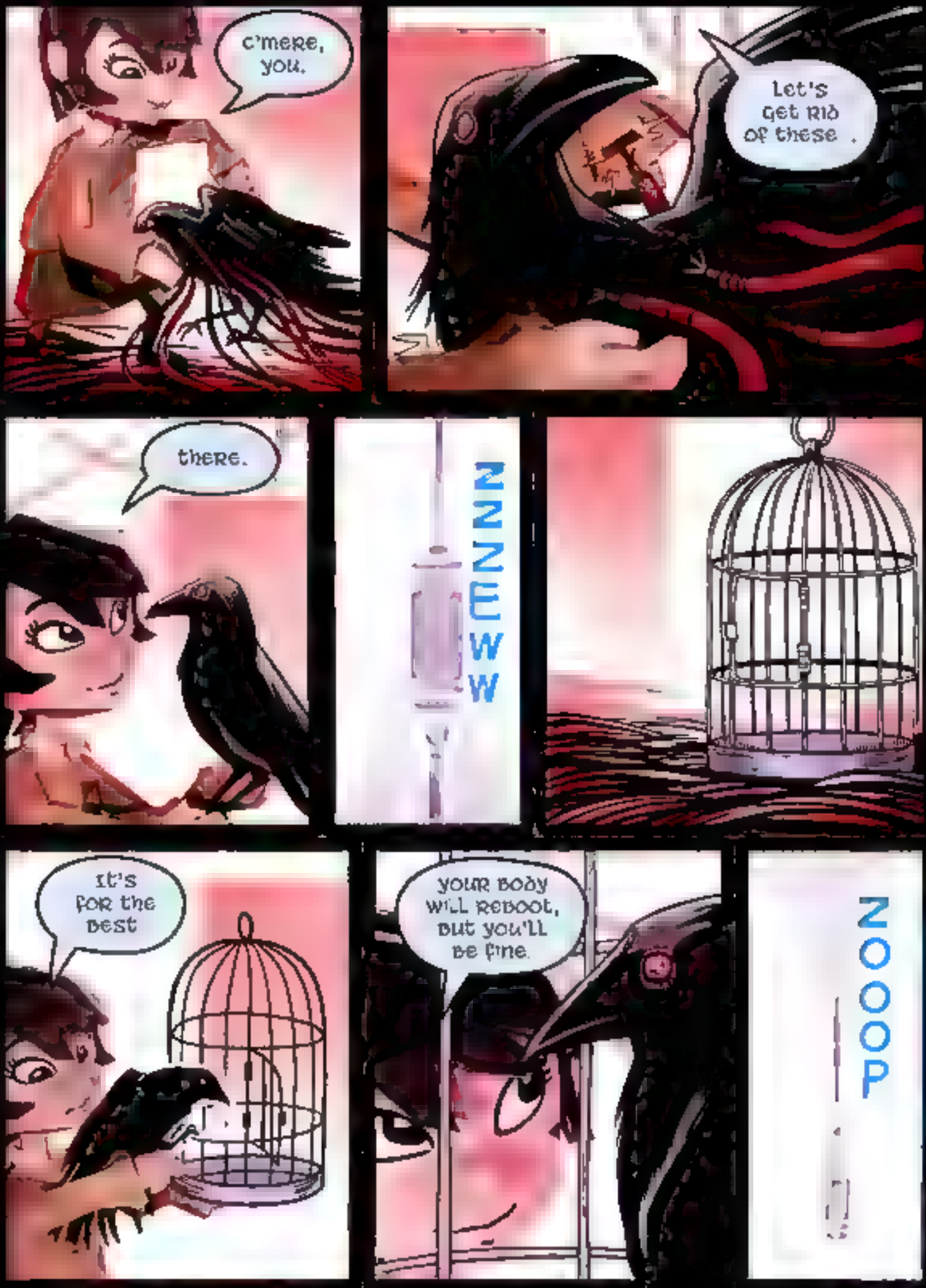
with the stuff I learned from ROBOT and the DISTORTION, I was able to make a direct interface.
I knew where you were, I just had to install it
when anne made it known we were looking for you, we knew you would try to kidnap whoever we approached.
again, sorry about that
so, when you acted, anne let renard signal me
I went to the location we figured and there you were!

let's see ..
access port .
access port...
here!

c'mon, c'mon!
we only have a few seconds out there!
the real world is so slow!


finally!
activating..

this must be the omega device's information array.
amazing.
CRAW!
ah and you must be omega herself.
why's it always birds?


c'mere, you.
Let's get rid of these .
there.
NNNEWW
It's for the best
your body will reboot, but you'll be fine.
NOOP

try opening your eyes
WAAA

I can't see anything!
you ~ you healed my curse!
you did something even my charles couldn't do!
there, there
oh! oh! the silence is too much!
it's wonderful!
very well done, katerina
is the omega device secured?
yeah, it's working normally all I did was sever it from omega herself

I have full access to it, but it's so complex I'll have to take my time with it
In the meantime, we should get your parents back.
the party is over, omega.
sniff
? ?
perhaps you could tell us what you set in motion with that young man?
I'm still not going to help you stop the distortion or the court.
what's she talking about?

she briefly kidnapped a boy your age. I think his name was jack
she involved jack hyland?!
she said something to him that seemed to disturb him greatly.
you may need to beware
zara, rosa, could you check up on him for me? find out if he's okay?
yyyyeah sure.

we don't blame you, omega. we know you just wanted to live.
your function helped build the court. I know you want it to succeed.
now, at least, you can experience it first hand, not as an observer from afar.
I - I suppose...
but I've decided that the court's efforts will not be at the expense of others.
I understand.
come along. let's get you out of here.

thank you, both. I'm really sorry we intruded like this.
yeah, thanks, guys.
don't worry about it! I'm glad you got your guy.
we'll talk to jack.
thank you!
we need all the help we can get with the distortion, so I hope we can see you again soon!

CLUNK
well, that annie seems very reasonable.
yeah. looks like she's been doing a lot.
mm mm.
it's a shame we'll have to kill her friend, kat.
yeah. oh well.